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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Mehli's Report, Syria/Iran,
Asad's Speech, Iraq, Iran (11/15)

1. Summary: Syrian papers today reported President Asad's messages to Arab and world leaders, the Security Council member states, the current chairman of the Arab Summit, the current chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Nonaligned Nations, the UN SecGen, and the Arab League secretary general, on cooperation with the international investigation commission and the relevant Syrian proposals.

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, who conveyed a message from Iranian President Ahmadinezhad. All papers reported Mottaki's press comments after his meeting with FM Shara, saying that he exchanged views with Syrian officials on the initiatives put forward by Iraq's neighboring states to bring the Iraqi crisis to an end through direct involvement of Iraqi people. Mottaki also said that he reviewed the facts behind the assassination of former Lebanese PM Al-Hariri, but he avoided any talk about mediating between Syria and Lebanon. He said that Syria has cooperated with the international commission of inquiry into the Hariri case and that the commission is expected to follow up the case free of political influence. Mottaki also said that he has examined "suspicious US provocations in the region," complaining that "the US is exploiting every event to further its interventionist goals."

2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad sends messages to leaders of fraternal and friendly countries, the Security Council member states on cooperation with the international investigation commission and the relevant Syrian proposals" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/15)

"President Asad receives a message from Iranian President Ahmadinezhad and discusses regional and international developments and pressure on Syria with Iranian FM Mottaki" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/15)

"Syrians in Al-Quneitra stage sit-ins and address a message to Annan: We insist on our right to restoration of the Golan" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/15)

"Lebanese politicians criticize Al-Saniora's government for failure to carry out its promises. Hizbollah: We shall not allow anybody to fool us" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/15)

"Sharon: We support the Al-Saniora's government and the disarmament of Hizbollah. Sharon and Rice criticize Syria and Iran" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/15)

"Arab member of the Kenesset, Talab al-Sane', calls for solidarity with Syria: Syria's confrontation of pressure protects stability in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/15)

"An Arab League ministerial consultation on Iraq will be held in Cairo on Friday. The Gulf Cooperation Council welcomes the reconciliation conference" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/15)

"The UN warns against human rights violations in Iraq. The UN Human Rights report focuses criticism on armed militias and the Iraqi government and ignores practices by the occupation troops" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/15)

3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Beyond the News: The Red Lines"
Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented: "In his speech, President Asad gave warning about the present serious stage, in which the nation's past, present and future have become a target. He said that they [Americans] want to wipe out our identity and history and to take away our future."
"President Asad's speech to the nation cannot be

summarizeed, and we cannot interpret what is already understood and clear. If danger is surrounding Syria today, tomorrow it will affect everyone, foremost among them those who have chosen to be governed by the will of ambitious strangers....

"Syria is a target regardless of what it does and how it cooperates. The weapon of lies exists and has been tested. They lie about the simplest matters, even about addressing an invitation for someone to attend a certain conference. They also lie about the Iraqi, Palestinian and Lebanese issues and entice whomever they want and intimidate whomever they choose. Moreover, woe upon those who stand up to this conspiracy and defend independence and sovereignty, if this independence and this sovereignty were to contradict their plans for colonial trusteeship.

"From the very beginning, there have been lies and false accusations, and, from the very beginning, the expression 'not enough' has prevailed. Also, from the very beginning, intentions have been exposed and Syria has been a target. Moreover, right from the beginning, we have chosen to hold our heads high and defend right, justice, sovereignty and freedom, for these are red lines over which we can never bargain."

"False Testimony and Fabrication of Proof"

Ali Nasrallah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented: "The story of the Syrian detainee in Ankara, who was intimidated and terrorized to give false testimony against Syria, is a new episode in the series of attempts to incriminate Syria in the Al-Hariri assassination....

"If the Al-Saqqa story is added to the Al-Siddiq false testimony and to the falsifications and contradictions in the Mehlis report, all these prove several facts. In the lead is the full acquittal of Syria of the crime of the Al-Hariri assassination....

"The other important fact is that the parties that persist in fabricating false testimony against Syria know quite well who killed Al-Hariri. These parties strive to hide this fact to incriminate Syria and to achieve the vicious goals of US and Israeli circles and wealthy Lebanese politicians who are their agents....

"If Mehlis seeks the truth, he must look for those who intimidated Al-Saqqa, and the parties that support them."

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